

Amendment to the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. Claims 48, 50, 59, 61, 62, 64, 75, and 76 have been amended, and new claims 77 and 78 have been added. Claims 58, 72, and 73 have been cancelled.

Listing of Claims

1-47. (Cancelled).

48. (Currently Amended) An expandable stent comprising:

a plurality of substantially cylindrical ring structures, wherein each ring structure extends completely around a circumference of the stent, and each ring structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zigzag pattern and comprises at least one unit structure; and

at least one connector member joining two of said ring structures when said stent is in an unexpanded state, said connector member being curved along a direction of a longitudinal axis of the stent and extending across a space separating adjacent ring structures, said connector member comprising a first end directly joined to one of said plurality of bends of one ring structure and a second end directly joined to one of said plurality of bends of an adjacent ring structure, wherein said at least one connector member is biodegradable along an entire length thereof between said first end and said second end and is adapted to biodegrade when said stent is in an expanded state so that said two ring structures become substantially disjointed.

49. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is substantially U or V shaped.

50. (Currently Amended) An expandable stent comprising:
a plurality of substantially cylindrical ring structures, wherein each ring structure extends completely around a circumference of ~~the said stent and comprises at least one unit structure,~~ wherein each of said ring structures comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zigzag pattern; and
at least one connector member joining two of said ring structures when said stent is in an unexpanded state, said connector member being longer in a direction of a longitudinal axis of ~~the said stent~~ than in a circumferential direction around ~~the said stent~~ and extending across a space separating adjacent ring structures, said at least one connector member comprising a first end joined to a first strut member disposed on one ring structure and a second end joined to a second strut member disposed on an adjacent ring structure, wherein said at least one connector member is substantially parallel with said first and second strut members when said stent is in said unexpanded state and said connector member is angled when said stent is in an expanded shape, and wherein said at least one connector member is biodegradable along an entire length thereof between said first end and said second end and is adapted to biodegrade when said stent is in an expanded state so that said two ring structures become substantially disjointed,
wherein said at least one connector member remains substantially parallel with said first and second strut members when said stent is in an expanded state until said two ring structures become substantially disjointed.

51. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is made of one or more of polymers, copolymers, block polymers, poly-lactic acid, poly-glycolic acid, polyglycolides, polylactides, polycaprolactones, polyglycerol sebacate, polycarbonates, polyethylene oxide, polybutylene terephthalate, polydioxanones, hybrids, composites, collagen matrices with growth

modulators, proteoglycans, glycosaminoglycans, vacuum formed small intestinal submucosa, fibers, chitin, and dextran.

52. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded.

53. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member comprises a multitude of layers each having varying degradation rates.

54. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member comprises one layer having a substantially uniform degradation rate.

55. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said ring structures comprise a non-biodegradable base material and one or more biodegradable coating layers.

56. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said ring structures comprise a base material made of a combination of non-biodegradable materials and biodegradable polymers.

57. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded.

58. (Cancelled).

59. (Currently Amended) The expandable stent of claim 48 ~~58~~, wherein said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure.

60. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

61. (Currently Amended) The expandable stent of claim 48, wherein said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded, said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded, ~~said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern, said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure,~~ and when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

62. (Currently Amended) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is curved between said first and second ends.

63. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 62, wherein said at least one connector member is substantially U or V shaped.

64. (Currently Amended) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is straight between said first and second ends.

65. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is made of one or more of polymers, copolymers, block polymers, poly-lactic acid, poly-glycolic acid, polyglycolides, polylactides, polycaprolactones, polyglycerol sebacate, polycarbonates, polyethylene oxide, polybutylene terephthalate, polydioxanones, hybrids, composites, collagen matrices with growth modulators, proteoglycans, glycosaminoglycans, vacuum formed small intestinal submucosa, fibers, chitin, and dextran.

66. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded.

67. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member comprises a multitude of layers each having varying degradation rates.

68. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member comprises one layer having a substantially uniform degradation rate.

69. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said ring structures comprise a non-biodegradable base material and one or more biodegradable coating layers.

70. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said ring structures comprise a base material made of a combination of non-biodegradable materials and biodegradable polymers.

71. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded.

72-73. (Cancelled).

74. (Previously Presented) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

75. (Currently Amended) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein ~~said at least one connector member is straight~~, said at least one connector member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded, said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded, ~~said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern, said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure~~, and when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

76. (Currently Amended) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said at least one connector member is curved, said at least one connector

member is adapted to biodegrade within thirty days to one-hundred eighty days after said stent is expanded, said at least one connector member is flexible prior to the stent being expanded, ~~said at least one unit structure comprises a plurality of strut members and a plurality of bends, said strut members and bends forming a substantially zig-zag pattern, said first end is connected to one of said plurality of bends of said one ring structure and said second end is connected to another of said plurality of bends of said adjacent ring structure,~~ and when said stent is in an unexpanded state there are two or more connector members joining said two ring structures and adjacent connector members are circumferentially aligned.

77. (New) The expandable stent of claim 50, wherein said first end of said at least one connector member is joined to said first strut member at an intermediate portion disposed between two bends of said plurality of bends in said one ring structure.

78. (New) The expandable stent of claim 77, wherein said second end of said at least one connector member is joined to said second strut member at an intermediate portion disposed between two bends of said plurality of bends in said adjacent ring structure.